

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION In San Diego County

SYNOPSIS

The Regional Occupation Program (ROP) managed by the San Diego County Office of Education is available to San Diego County high school students, out-of-school students, college students and adults. In San Diego County there are twenty-two vocational education/ROPs, now referred to as *CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)*. The Grand Jury found no lack of vocational occupational programs in any part of the County. In fact, the Grand Jury found the programs to be varied, relative and broad based; however, too few students avail themselves of the programs due to the near total emphasis in California secondary education toward students meeting the admission requirements of the University of California.

The Grand Jury recommends that the San Diego County Office of Education sponsor state legislation to allow a technical training emphasis in high school graduation requirements, as well as a college preparatory emphasis. Additionally, the Jury asks that the San Diego County Office of Education and each school district serving high school grades establish programs to facilitate pupils' participation in Career Technical Education training, if appropriate to the individual student's goals for beyond their post-secondary education.

ISSUES

The 2001-2002 Grand Jury addressed the following:

1. Is there a lack of quantity or quality of vocational education in San Diego County?
2. Is there a general lack of interest in the vocational education programs offered?
3. Is there a lack of knowledge, on the part of prospective students, of classes and courses available?
4. Are the programs and classes which are offered reflective of today's career and social needs?
5. Is there an over-emphasis on 4-year college preparation in our high school curriculum?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Grand Jury studied both the existence and the relativity of vocational education programs available in the County. This effort clearly determined that broad and currently relevant vocational education programs exist in nearly all secondary schools and community college districts, and are available to all students. Many students may not be able to take advantage of the program due to other curriculum constraints. High school graduation requirements in San Diego County (and the State of California) are largely based upon a curriculum designed to meet University of California (UC) admission requirements. Whereas these requirements may be appropriate for those students planning on careers requiring a college diploma, this academic focus becomes burdensome and somewhat unnecessary for students planning careers requiring technical skills, training and knowledge available through CTE programs.

A review and comparison of the number of high school graduates continuing with 4-year college degree programs versus those graduates going on to 2-year colleges or technical schools, the military services or directly to the job market indicates an over emphasis on a high school curriculum geared toward state university entry. There is a need for those students who do not aspire to earn a 4-year college degree to obtain technical knowledge and receive training through participation in a CTE curriculum. By allowing them to pursue appropriate post-secondary career paths, non-college-bound students can formally graduate from high school and be able to go directly to work or to seek further technical training.¹

PROCEDURES EMPLOYED

The San Diego County Superintendent of Schools was contacted and interviewed, as was the Vocational Education Director of the San Diego County Office of Education.

The managers of seventeen of the twenty-two vocational education programs were also consulted. The California Education Code Section 51220, subdivision (i), states that career technical education shall be “designed and conducted for the purpose of preparing youth for gainful employment in the

¹ *Accountability Study Findings, 2002 Technical Report: A Feasibility Study for California Regional Occupational Centers and Programs.* (School Improvement Research Group, University of California, Riverside, 2002); California Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, Kindergarten through University, *Workforce Preparation and Business Linkages Strategic Planning Working Group, Final Report* (2001); California State Senate, 2002.

occupations and in the numbers that are appropriate to the personnel needs of the state and the community served and relevant to the career desires and needs of the pupils.”

The Grand Jury investigation revealed that all of the County’s secondary grade school districts have adopted the curriculum recommended by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), which establishes subject areas and courses required for minimum eligibility for admission to the UC system. These established subject areas and courses are called the “a-g” requirements. The California State University (CSU) system has also accepted these courses for its admission criteria effective Fall 2003.²

FACTS

- A. All twenty-two CTE programs have advisory committees, as prescribed by the California Education Code. These committees consist of students, teachers and representatives of the general public knowledgeable about the disadvantaged, local industry, school administration, and Department of Employment Development policies.³
- B. Traditional vocational education classes, such as home economics, auto shop, wood shop and metal shop, are available. In recognition of emerging technical career opportunities in fields such as information technology, health care and hotel services, vocational education programs include classes in these career areas as well.⁴
- C. The major providers of *CTE* are⁵:
 - o Regional Occupational Program (ROP) (Covers school districts for grades 11-12, including those that provide adult education and occupational centers and programs).
 - o Community college (s) (Includes graduates from high school and/or those who have completed the General Education Development (GED) program).
 - o High School vocational education programs (all 18 school districts in San Diego County with secondary grades participate).

² “University of California, ‘a-f/g’ Subject Area Requirements,” page 2. “a-g” requirements refer to the following lettered subject areas: (a) History and Social Sciences, (b) English, (c) Mathematics, (d) Laboratory Science, (e) Languages other than English, (f) Visual and Performing Arts, and (g) College Preparatory Electives.

³ California Education Code, Section 8070.

⁴ Grand Jury interviews.

⁵ Grand Jury interviews.

- School-to-Career programs (a Federal program for funding secondary, post-secondary and adult vocational education programs, as created by the *Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1998*, known as the “Perkins Act”).⁴
 - Various business/industrial liaison programs (established by the California Education Code 8070 & 8090; where programs work in conjunction with various businesses to provide specific career or job training).
- D. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 provided for states and localities to build high-quality school-to-work opportunity systems that prepare young people for further education and careers in high-skill, high-wage jobs. In California, the school-to-work program is known as School-to-Career and is jointly administered by the California Department of Education, the California Employment Development Department, and the California Community College Chancellor’s Office.
- E. All of the CTE district offices distribute registration booklets throughout local communities.⁶
- F. Information regarding vocational classes is advertised in local newspapers. Over 40,000 informational booklets are mailed annually throughout the County.⁷
- G. The State Job Training Coordinating Council gathers information about students to evaluate California’s work force training system. Three years after completion of a training program, the State Job Training Coordinating Council gathers information related to the student’s type of employment, wages earned, unemployment or disability payments received, or enrollment in any welfare program. This follow-up information from the student is voluntary and is available for analysis only if the student has approved release of the data by signing the privacy notice and consent form included with the enrollment application.⁸

⁴ Reinstated for 5 years, to expire 2004, per Public Law 105332.

⁶ Grand Jury interviews.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ State of California Job Training Enrollment Form.

FINDINGS:

- I. Many high school students wanting to take CTE classes must take them after school hours or in the evening because they must take the required college preparatory classes during regular school hours.
- II. All 11th and 12th grade students and out-of-school youth (includes students on work furlough, 16 years of age or older) have access to CTE programs.
- III. Communication, collaboration, and cooperation between the two environments of *school* and *work* are advocated and readily apparent within the CTE programs.
- IV. Throughout San Diego County, the School-to-Career Program priorities are to develop career academies and to redesign courses to meet industry certification.
- V. The education system (per State of California, County of San Diego, and local school board requirements) is focused on preparing students for admission to a four-year college. In reality, however, nearly 35% of graduating secondary students enter the job market, the military, or technical/trade schools.⁹
- VI. The CTE programs provide job training courses to nearly 40,000 residents a year, covering more than 400 different professional careers. Each of these programs has been carefully mapped out by a panel of knowledgeable business people. These groups specify the requirements for their particular career field. As a result, program graduates are in demand as soon as they reach the job market.¹⁰
- VII. Random interviews of students currently enrolled in vocational education courses revealed total, or near total, satisfaction with the courses offered.¹¹
- VIII. Interviews with various school and program personnel indicated that where vocational education programs were available and on-going, there were very few truancies.¹²

⁹ California Joint Committee, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ California Education Code 8070.

¹¹ Grand Jury interviews.

¹² *Ibid.*

Recommendations:

That the San Diego County Office of Education:

- 02-35:** Pursue state legislation that would make high school graduation requirements reflect career technical training courses with the same emphasis as college preparatory courses.

That the San Diego County Office of Education and each of the County's school districts responsible for secondary grades:

- 02-36:** Develop a program to enable all pupils to participate in Career Technical Education training, if appropriate to their post-secondary education goals.
- 02-37:** Establish counseling programs to facilitate pupils' access to vocational/technical curricula, as well as college preparatory curricula.
- 02-38:** Inculcate career technical education as an acceptable part of secondary education.

REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

The California Penal Code §933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days* after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code §933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
 - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
- (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
 - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
 - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
 - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code §933.05 are required by the date indicated from:

RESPONDING AGENCY	RECOMMENDATIONS	DATE
San Diego County Office of Education	02-35 through 02-38	09/03/02
Borrego Springs Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02

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RESPONDING AGENCY	RECOMMENDATIONS	DATE
Carlsbad Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Coronado Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Escondido Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Fallbrook Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Grossmont Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Julian Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Mountain Empire Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Oceanside Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Poway Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Ramona Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
San Diego Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
San Dieguito Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
San Marcos Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02

RESPONDING AGENCY	RECOMMENDATIONS	DATE
Sweetwater Union High School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Vista Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02
Warner Unified School District	02-36 through 02-38	09/03/02

